

Homeland Security, designed to prevent the next 9/11.

To be sure, there were moments when we went off in the wrong direction. Over the years, we worked to rein in legislation like the PATRIOT Act and protect civil liberties of the American people.

As lawmakers, our responsibility is to enact sensible solutions and save lives while also protecting our Constitution. That is exactly what the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act is all about. It will improve data collection on incidents of domestic terrorism and strengthen Federal coordination to combat it.

That is why it makes no sense to me that there are Republicans who oppose it. The same Republicans who once took bold steps to prevent terrorism on an international basis now won't even allow us to debate a bill to prevent terrorism at home.

There are actually Republican Members of the House who are cosponsors of my bill, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, who just last week voted against it, cosponsors. What exactly is the reason for this Republican opposition?

Well, one Senate Republican claimed that the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would be "the PATRIOT Act for American citizens." That is phony and wrong.

First of all, as I just mentioned, the PATRIOT Act was flawed. It was an excessive policy response to a nation in panic. I should know because I voted for it and then led the effort to change it. Here is why the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act is different.

Unlike the PATRIOT Act, it will not provide any new law enforcement or surveilling power to the government. It also does not establish a single new criminal offense. Let me repeat this. The bill that comes before us on domestic terrorism does not create any new Federal crime, period. This is a modest bill with a simple goal: ensure that the Federal Government devotes existing resources and authorities to what has been identified by the FBI as the most significant domestic terrorism threats.

Who supports this bill? The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the Arab-American Institute, the NAACP. All of them and more support the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act.

I hope our Republican colleagues will join us in a bipartisan effort to keep America safe. Last week, I spoke to the courage and sacrifice of Aaron Salter, a retired police officer who was working as a security guard in that Buffalo grocery store at the time of the attack.

When the shooter entered the store, Officer Salter jumped into action. He fired multiple shots at the attacker, but his skill and courage were not enough. He was outgunned. He had a pistol. The shooter had an assault rifle and a tactical vest. It is a scenario

that, sadly, is becoming too common. We saw it yesterday in Texas.

The attacker in yesterday's school shooting in Uvalde was also carrying an assault rifle and wearing a tactical vest. He reportedly shot two officers before entering the school and wounding a Federal law enforcement official.

Can the Members of this Senate say in good conscience that we have done enough to protect the lives of police officers and the children in communities like Uvalde? Of course not. They were killed by people who never should have had a gun in the first place.

With the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, this Senate can take the first step of many steps needed to save lives and reject hate. The next step is finally closing the loophole that allows guns to fall into the wrong hands. Ten years ago, after 26 little children, God bless them, were murdered by a disturbed gunman in Sandy Hook Elementary School, we voted to close gaps in the gun background check system, and we fell short.

Will we finally close those gaps now after another school filled with little babies and children was targeted in a mass shooting? The CDC reported last week that for the first time in more than 60 years, car accidents are no longer the leading cause of death for kids and teens. As of 2020, the leading cause of death of children and adolescents in America is guns—guns. Guns are the No. 1 threat to our children.

When will we finally find the courage and the spine to pass commonsense changes to our gun laws that the vast majority of Americans support?

Well, this Friday, the National Rifle Association is holding its annual meeting in, of all places, Texas. A few of the politicians who are scheduled to speak at that gathering were among the first to send their thoughts and prayers to Uvalde. Well, I hope and pray they will find the courage to stop cowering before the gun lobby and take action to save our children's lives.

Let me address one last misconception about this bill. A number of my colleagues have said: Well, why did you have to use the words "White supremacists" or "neo-Nazis" in the bill? Why did you want to focus on that?

Let me make it clear that we are focusing on domestic terrorism, and that is why we mention White supremacism. The bill requires reports to Congress on all domestic terrorism activity, with a breakdown by specific category.

The bill requires that White supremacist terrorism be one of those specific categories. We include this requirement because during the Trump Presidential administration, the FBI was ordered to stop tracking White supremacist attacks as a separate category of domestic terrorism.

Remarkably, the FBI stopped tracking White supremacist attacks in the middle of the spate of White supremacist violence, including the lethal attack at the 2017 Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally and the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting.

This decision also came after an unclassified May 2017 joint intelligence bulletin from the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security that found "white supremacist extremism poses [a] persistent threat of lethal"—lethal—"violence," and that White supremacists "were responsible for 49 homicides and 26 attacks from 2016 . . . more than any other domestic extremist movement."

I am not making this up. People are dying because of these extremists. We are asking the FBI and other Agencies to identify the incidents of violence so that we can track them, find if they are growing or receding; train local law enforcement to recognize it.

This bill does not require collecting of data on First Amendment-protected speech at all, no matter how vile that speech may be. It only requires the FBI to provide a report to Congress on violent domestic terrorist activity that the FBI is already investigating.

In fact, this bill does not provide any new law enforcement or surveillance powers to the government. It does not establish any new criminal offenses.

This morning there is an outrage over the violence that took place in Texas. The question is, Can we channel this outrage into an active, productive effort to pass legislation to make America safer?

We know what the problem is. We know what the challenge is with domestic terrorism. The question is, Can we gather the information to put an end to it? Isn't that our responsibility, what comes to our responsibility as Senators and as citizens in this country?

In the U.S. Senate, let's start with this bill. Domestic terrorism is for real. We saw a form of it in Buffalo, NY, and we are going to see it again, I am afraid, unless we take it very seriously.

Fighting terrorism used to be a bipartisan effort, and I hope it will once again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each prior to the scheduled votes: MURRAY, WYDEN, and BROWN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF LISA M. GOMEZ

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor today to support the nomination of Lisa Gomez as the Assistant Secretary for the Department

of Labor's Employee Benefit Security Administration, or EBSA.

EBSA has the massive task of helping retirees recover the benefits they are entitled to and forcing protections for people who get their healthcare coverage through their job, and overseeing millions of retirement plans, health plans, and other welfare benefit plans.

We need a strong leader at EBSA who will protect families' savings and futures and make sure people get the benefits they deserve under Federal law.

We need someone like Lisa Gomez. Ms. Gomez is a highly respected professional in the field of employee benefits law, who has represented a wide range of health plans, retirement plans, and more. And I am confident as Assistant Secretary she will fight to hold employers accountable to the law, ensure workers get the benefits they are owed, and protect families' financial security, and I strongly urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm her.

ROBB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SHOOTING

Madam President, I can't leave the floor of the Senate today without talking about the heartbreaking shooting that took place at Robb Elementary School in Texas yesterday.

Nineteen children, two teachers at an elementary school. These were kids who were excited for summer, playdates with their friends—murdered by weapons of war.

This carnage is happening right here in America in fourth grade classrooms.

My heart breaks for the family and loved ones of these kids and their teachers, not to mention the kids and educators who will carry the trauma of that day with them for the rest of their lives.

But I am also furious. A lot of people have characterized this tragedy as "un-thinkable." But at this point, this kind of tragedy is not unthinkable. Parents in Washington State and everywhere else in America think about this all the time. They think about it every day when they drop off their kids at school. How can you not? They thought about it after the shooting in Buffalo at a grocery store 10 days earlier. They think about it every time there is another mass shooting, which is far, far too often—3,865 times since the Sandy Hook school shooting 10 years ago, to be exact.

What is unthinkable is that every time this happens, nothing changes. Every time, Republicans stand in the way of meaningful action. That is not just unthinkable; it is unacceptable.

But we don't have to live like this. This is a solvable problem. Republicans need to have the courage, the decency, the basic concern for the lives of our kids to work with Democrats on commonsense gun safety reforms.

They need to decide should school be a place where our kids and teachers feel safe, where they can talk about homework and class projects, where

they can be kids and laugh about what ever happened during lunch or art class? Or will they continue to be a place where school shooter drills are as routine as recess or algebra for our kids?

I want my colleagues to consider that.

What message are you sending to parents and kids, to teachers and students if you won't even allow a debate on commonsense measures like universal background checks?

I have heard Republican lawmakers talk about the need to have police officers at every school. I wish it were that simple, but we know it is not.

We saw yesterday that having an armed officer onsite at schools will not solve this crisis, despite the best efforts of law enforcement.

Some Republicans have suggested arming teachers. Are you kidding? Can you hear yourself? Teachers did not sign up to be soldiers, and guns have no place in our classroom.

Some Republicans will say: Well, this is a mental health issue. So let me be clear: America is facing a mental health and substance use disorder crisis. It is serious. It requires urgency, and I am actively working on bipartisan legislation to expand access to prevention and treatment and recovery services.

But I want to make this plain: The majority of people with mental illness do not commit violence against others.

Treating gun violence as a mental health issue rather than a gun issue will never get us to the root cause of these horrific shootings.

If we want to get at the heart of really stopping gun violence, I beg my colleagues to pull their heads out of the sand and finally start talking about what can really address this crisis of gun violence: commonsense gun safety legislation—and there is no getting around it—universal background checks and an assault weapons ban.

Now, I am ready to work with any Republican to make any kind of meaningful progress here. States like mine have made good progress on gun safety measures to keep our communities safe, but we cannot count on a patchwork of laws where one State requires background checks and another one right next door does not. We need Federal action. We need to get something done.

To my constituents in Washington State and the American people, I know and understand it can be disheartening to parents around the country to see the continued Republican obstruction on gun safety in Congress. Change is not easy, but let me be clear: Doing nothing and letting this continue to happen is the most extreme option on the table.

I have come to the floor of the Senate countless times to call for action to keep our kids and our families safe from gun violence, just to have Republicans block our efforts again and again. It is frustrating. It is infuri-

ating. But I will keep pushing for gun safety laws that the majority of Americans do support because we cannot give up. That is what the NRA and other extremists want us to do. The vast majority of Americans have made clear, they want an end to gun violence.

And I refuse to let Republicans get away with this yet again, to dance around the real issue, to distract us with conversations about arming teachers or tripwires outside elementary schools. Enough. Enough.

We need to force Republicans to bear witness to the tragic consequences of their inaction. We need people and families across the country to do the same. No one gets to look away. No one gets to change the subject. I promise all of the students and parents, grandparents, teachers, everyone in Washington State that despite the obstruction and silence from my Republican colleagues, I will not stay quiet and I will keep pushing for change and I really hope the American people will do the same.

Using our voices and our votes, we can change things. We can hold Republicans accountable, and we can make progress to end gun violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, it seems very appropriate that Senator MURRAY, our chair of the HELP Committee—she and I—I am the chair of the Finance Committee—often work together on these issues. As Northwest colleagues, we see how serious and how incredibly damaging the last 24 hours have been to our country.

I am going to speak in a few minutes about a Health and Human Services nomination, but I want to pick up where Senator MURRAY left off with respect to guns and specifically talk about the atrocity—the atrocity—that took place yesterday in Texas.

I think Senators can barely begin to imagine the pain the families in Texas are feeling at this moment. They are living every parent's worst nightmare.

This morning, around the country millions and millions of parents dropped kids off at school, and they were fearful. In a country that we all believe is and must continue to be the greatest country on Earth, parents drop their kids off at school in fear that a gunman would walk into their classrooms and murder them.

Let's think about that.

And it has been going on for decades—decades—in our country. We can remember the sinking, empty feeling after Sandy Hook. For a few days, there was a glimmer of hope that the Senate would do something on a bipartisan basis, but then the other side caved to the gun lobby. Congress has done nothing in response to all this carnage in our schools, in our grocery stores, in our churches. Atrocity after atrocity after atrocity, and yet people still live in fear that their kids are next. They live with hopelessness due